Army Ouster Of News Aide Starts Probe

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The House Information Subcommittee is investigating why Col. George E. Moranda was removed as head of Army news services in Europe.

Reports from Frankfurt, West Germany, yesterday claimed his removal stemmed from his refusal to kill a Stars & Stripes story about the arrest of Michael Anthony McGhee, 19-year-old son of the U.S. Ambassador to West Germany, George C. McGhee.

The Pentagon in response to queries said Moranda was now on leave and it was checking into the circumstances of his transfer. His new job has not been determined, the Pentagon said.

The article about young McGhee's arrest in California ran in two editions of the armed forces newspaper on Feb. 3 before it was killed. The story said McGhee was arrested on a charge of driving under the influence of LSD.

Resisted Pressure

Overseas Weekly, a private publication of service news, said Moranda "had his head chopped off" after resisting pressure from the U. S. Embassy in Bonn to remove the story about McGhee from Stars & Stripes.

An Embassy spokesman said "there was no Embasy pressure to have this story removed." Lt. Col. Edward E. Keevan, acting Army information chief at Heidelberg, said "Col. Moranda was not reassigned because of the news story."

The House Information Subcommittee, headed by Rep. John E. Moss (D.-Calif.), has asked the Pentagon not only about Moranda but also other information officers who have been removed from the Army's European command.

Received Reports

The reason for broadening the inquiry, a subcommittee source said, is that it has received reports that Gen. Andrew P. O'Meara, commander of Army forces in Europe, has dismissed one information officer after another.

The Moss subcommittee plans to trace the tenure of Army information officers in Europe to see if there is any pattern to substantiate those reports.

A few weeks ago, the Moss subcommittee conducted an investigation of the Pentagon's proposal to move the New York offices of Stars & Strips to the Washington area. Moss feared this might put the news operation under the thumb of the Pentagon. The Defense Department backed off and did not go through with the move.

Col. Moranda has been awarded the Bronze Star. Reports from Frankfurt claimed he removed the McGhee article only after being ordered to do so by superior officers.